

Irak

I. Arab Life in the New Mesopotamian State

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THERE is probably less variety of scenery in Irak—or, to give it its old name, Mesopotamia—than in any other country of the same extent. Arabia, at least, has the Yemen range and the Jebel Akhdar, green and grassy slopes rising 9,900 feet behind Muscat, but Mesopotamia contains no green valleys and tablelands save in the ranges that form the glacis of Persia and Kurdistan to the east and north. To the west and south the boundaries are desert and sea, and in the country east of the Euphrates and south of Basra the illimitable monotony is repeated that is so wearisome to the eye on the journey up the Tigris from Basra to Bagdad.

On entering the country from the sea the palm belt on the Shat-el-Arab, stretching from the Gulf to a few miles north of Kurna, where the Tigris and Euphrates meet, gives an impression of tropical fertility. According to the Moslem geographers of the twelfth century, the gardens of the Uballa Canal at Basra were held by the Arabs to be one of the four earthly paradises. Kurna is reputed by local legend to be the Garden of Eden, and a certain gnarled thorn bush is pointed out as "the tree of the knowledge of good

and evil." In the eyes of the first desert dwellers this fringe of fertility would naturally have appeared paradisiacal. But it is an isolated zone, and does not stretch more than half a mile inland from the river bank. One passes out of the shade of the palms into the barren sand or baked clay which is Mesopotamia.

That the country was once rich and populous evidence abounds. North of Ctesiphon one can scarcely traverse a mile without discovering the site of some ancient city or town. Everywhere one comes across mounds strewn with fragments of vases, bricks, potsherds, and glazed tiles. The remains of ancient embankments which used to carry the fertilising irrigation channels to the fields are the only features on

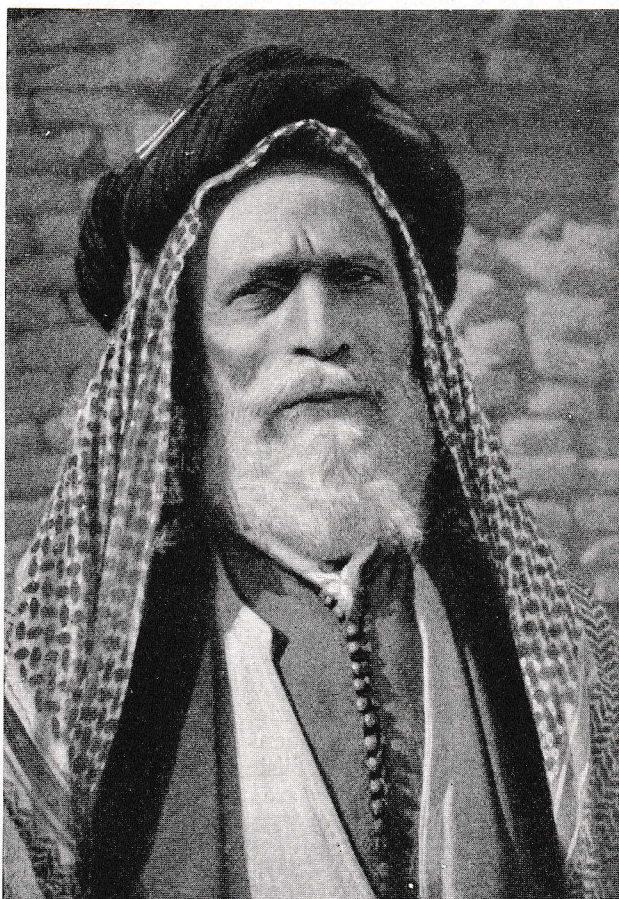
the desert horizon that the mirage can torture into hills. The bricks of Babylon bearing the stamp of Nebuchadrezzar (Nebuchadnezzar) or Sardanapalus, which were built into the walls of Hilla and Bagdad, represent but a single layer in the strata of ancient civilizations which the thirsty soil of the country has swallowed up. In Mesopotamia one is reminded every day that the territories subject to the Osmanli lie dead under his hand, that the



AN ARAB ARISTOCRAT

Beduins of the desert, of whom this man is one, are the old aristocracy of Irak's Arab population, disdainful of the degenerate ways of their settled riverain kinsmen

Photo, R. Gorbald



GOLD AND SILVERSMITH OF AMARA

Age's quiet dignity and the assurance given by years of fine and successful craftsmanship reveal themselves in the bearded countenance of this ancient of Amara. The town was wrested from the Turk by General Townshend in 1915

Photo, G. Wagstaff

blight where he has governed is as certain as famine after drought.

Upstream of Kurna, on the Tigris and Euphrates, one passes through the country of the marsh Arabs. The land visible from the lower reaches of the Euphrates in the neighbourhood of the Hammar Lake and Nasrieh is the richest in Mesopotamia. In May and June all this land is inundated; the highest ground in a village is not a foot above flood level, and most of the inhabitants take to their boats, leaving their reed huts standing in water. Higher upstream the richness of the land becomes apparent in the broad, strong towers which lie like Saxon churches under the

palm clumps at intervals on the horizon. On the Tigris, a few miles above Kurna, one enters a treeless tract of swamp and desert with a thin belt of irrigated land beside the river. The villages resemble those of the Punjab or the North-West Frontier of India, the same sloping mud walls enclosing the courtyard, with the cow-dung cakes for fuel plastered against the walls to dry in the sun. The only brick-built habitation in the permanent villages is the house of the sheikh. Above Amara the reed huts of the Arab give place to goathair tents.

The settled Arab population of the cultivated delta of the Tigris and Euphrates are descendants of immigrants from the Arabian deserts. Physically, the adoption of the cultivator's life has improved them; they are better nourished, stronger, heavier, taller men than the Beduins, and bigger in the bone, though by abandoning their nomad existence they have lost

in honour and independence. The Beduin scorns them, and will not intermarry with them. Yet, apart from the town-dweller, the old tribal organization remains, tribal law and customs hold good, and the blood-feud is still obligatory.

Many of the riverain Arabs are handsome, and have a certain hawk-like dignity and grace of carriage. The women are fair, and go about unveiled. Some of the children have brown or chestnut hair. The riverain Arab is noted for his teeming progeny. The sheikh with three or four wives can generally boast of a family of from forty to fifty. The Muntafik, the first

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tribal confederation one meets on leaving the Shat-el-Arab and following up the Tigris and Euphrates, a people spread over some fifty or sixty square miles, are believed to outnumber the Anazeh, the great Beduin tribe which peoples the desert from the borders of Syria to the sands of Central Arabia.

The riverain Arab, degenerate as he may be, judged by the Beduin code, is not unmanly. Under the Ottoman rule he consistently defied the Turk when opportunity offered. There is not a tribe on the Euphrates or Tigris that has not been in a state of rebellion at some time against the Osmanli. The attempts to collect the rice revenue from the Shamiah on the Euphrates were always the prelude to quite extensive autumn manoeuvres; the marsh Arabs lower down the river in

the neighbourhood of the Hammar lake used to fire on the Turkish flag as a matter of principle, so that it was generally safer for the Ottoman official to conceal his insignia of office.

North of the Muntafik on the Tigris one meets the Abu Mohammed and the Beni-Lam, great rebels against the Ottoman Government before the Great War. The Beni-Lam have long had the reputation of being the most truculent and inhospitable of the Tigris Arabs, men who, according to Layard, neither respected the laws of hospitality nor behaved in any sort like good Mussulmans, who were as treacherous as they were savage and cruel, and who would cut the throat of a guest for a trifle. They joined the Turk against the British, but proved most uncomfortable allies, turning always with the tide



SILVER SPEECH BEGUILES THE TASK OF BEATING OUT THE GOLD

Conversation is a serious occupation in the East, and the dark little shops afford pleasantly shady recesses in which to carry it on. Here, in Mosul, a goldsmith, squatting on the floor amid all the paraphernalia of his trade, clinks his hammer on the metal held in the vice before him, entertained the while by a constant succession of garrulous neighbours

Photo, Major W. J. P. Rodd



"REVEALED THE SECRET STANDS OF NATURE'S WORK"

Blandishments of the photographer prevailed over the force of convention, and this Bagdad Jewess was induced to unveil before the camera the face on which none but her family was supposed to gaze. The wife of a wealthy man, her robe is of white silk of finest quality, fringed and lined with gold thread, and her long braids of hair are fastened at the ends with trinkets

Photo, Major W. J. P. Rodd



DARK EYES AND BRIGHT ROBES OF ARABY

Character and high intelligence as well as attraction are clearly marked in the pleasing features of this dignified lady of Irak, with her shawled head and gay ornaments, as she stands beneath the palm tree's shade. Her bare feet, accustomed to the lack of shoes, peep out beneath her dress as she stands, confidence in every line of her, to undergo the novelty of being photographed

Photo, Major W. J. P. Rodd



DINNER AND DEVOTION JOINTLY AIDING LABOUR

It would be surprising to see a gang of Roman Catholic navvies eating their dinner with their rosaries ready at hand for immediate use afterwards. These Arab coolies, devout followers of Mahomet, see nothing incongruous in eating their midday meal without tables or cloth, and spreading out their prayer mat whereon to turn towards Mecca and pray at the appointed hour

Photo, Harry Cox

of fortune and murdering and looting their Mahomedan brethren whenever opportunity delivered them into their hands. The Beni-Lam were not alone in this. It has been the privilege of the Arab in Mesopotamia for at least two thousand years to attack, pillage, and murder the losing side. They were "the Saracens" who hung on the flank of Julian's army and fell upon the stragglers by the way. Townshend's wounded were stripped and mutilated by them. They are frankly plunderers, and kill their prey before they strip it. They dig up graves and leave the dead stark.

On account of these practices the British and Indian troops in Mesopotamia

formed a very low estimate of the Arab of the country, or only admired him as an expert rifle thief. The Turk has always had a contempt for his fighting qualities, while the proud Beduins of the inner desert, "the people of the camel," will not associate with him, and deny that he is capable of loyalty even among his own community. Nevertheless he is not wanting in a kind of straw-fire courage. If he has proved useless in war it is because he has never felt bound by any allegiance, but has played for his own hand, and therefore is found on the side of the strongest battalions. When he puts his person in jeopardy



PEACE IN A BACKWATER OF A PALM-FRINGED STREAM

It is only in a narrow belt lining the river beds that any vegetation, even remotely suggesting the Paradise of tradition, exists in Irak. Here the date palms give a tropical appearance to the scene and exclude thought of the arid waste behind. This pretty spot is a creek off the Shat-el-Arab, near Basra, the mat-screened structures being a date-packing station

Photo, Harry Cox

he demands his quid pro quo. His adventures are frankly predatory, and his code, if ever he had one, has long since been forgotten.

The bulk of the Arab population of Mesopotamia are Shiah, though the country has long been under the rule of the Turk, who is a Sunni. Under the Ottoman Government the Shiah had no political status. Shiah religious bequests had no legal recognition. Nor was Shiah religious law, which differs from that of the Sunnis, included in the Ottoman code. The Sunni minority in the country has a political and social importance out of proportion to its numbers. It includes the Naquibs of

Basra and Bagdad and the largest landowners and wealthiest merchants.

The Sunnis among the settled population are, with few exceptions, town-dwellers. The nomad Arab, too, like his brother of the Arabian desert, is generally a Sunni; but the Shiah sentiment in Irak, which is the birth-place of the religion, and contains the holy shrines of Kerbela and Najaf, is so strong that generation after generation of Sunni immigrants have adopted the faith of the country. In Bagdad there is a large Christian and Jewish population. The Armenian Bagdadis suffered less from the Turk in and before the Great War than their

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co-religionists in any other part of the Ottoman Empire, and escaped the general massacres. The Arabs of Mesopotamia are little infected with the fanaticism of Islam, while the Turks were a small community, confined more or less to the families of the officials. The Armenians in Bagdad were never regarded by them as an economic menace, or even as a cause of political uneasiness.

The Sabaeans, or Star Worshipers, of Mesopotamia, as they are sometimes called, are found scattered in the towns by the two rivers. Their religious observances make it incumbent upon

them to live near running water. Suk-esh-Sheyukh is their headquarters on the Euphrates and Amara on the Tigris. They are a distinct people with many curious characteristics and beliefs, which they have inherited from Jews, Christians, Pagans, and Mahomedans. Their bible, the Sidra Rabba, a jumble of borrowed and contradictory doctrines, is a closed book to the profane. They observe the first day in the week, baptism, the Lord's Supper, and reverence for John the Baptist. Yet they are not Christians. Neither are they Jews, though their ritual of sacrifice and purification is



GERM-FEARLESS DRAWERS OF WATER FROM OLD TIGRIS

Water supply and drainage systems are matters of small concern to the Oriental. At Bagdad and other riverside towns in Irak the Arabs come down to the river to fetch water, the men with the goatskins in which they purvey it in the streets, the women with their ornamental pitchers, all regardless of the fact that it is contaminated by sewage leaking down from the towns

Photo, Harry Cox

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peculiarly Semitic. Expert silversmiths, they were known to the British troops chiefly by their inlaid work of antimony on silver, probably the only form of modern indigenous handicraft worth taking away from the country. The community form an isolated guild, in which the secrets of their trade are preserved as jealously as their religious arcana.

Another strange obscurantist Mesopotamian cult is that practised by the Yezidis or devil-worshippers, who dwell in the Jebel Sinjar

range, to the far north, a persecuted non-Arab race, probably of Kurdish stock. The principle of evil which they propitiate is symbolised for them in the snake and the sacred peacock.

In the latitude of Bagdad the Tigris and Euphrates are within twenty-five miles of meeting. This means that the roads from the Mediterranean into Asia, the Tadmor-Deir-el-Zor route by the Euphrates, the road which crosses the Taurus by the Cilician Gates and follows the Tigris down from Mosul, all lead to Bagdad or Babylon. The convergence of the river routes has from time immemorial dictated the site of the metropolis of Mesopotamia. Bagdad, too, receives the commerce of the Gulf ; it is



"JUDGE THE WORLD BY THE WAY THEY TREAD"

In their queer little caverns in Bagdad, Arab shoemakers turn out scores of pairs of the heelless slippers affected by the population, and, like the old cobbler shown above, patch up soles worn threadbare on the ill-paved streets

Photos, R. Gorbald



MAMMON SETS HIS MARKET ALONGSIDE THE MOSQUE

Floods played havoc with Bagdad in the early part of the nineteenth century, and it is only in the solidly-built mosques that good examples of early Arab architecture remain. Outside these old brick buildings, variegated with peacock-blue and old gold, a cosmopolitan crowd is generally found, venders of bread, sweetmeats, and fruit welcoming the open spaces as a convenient market place for their wares

Photo, Major W. J. P. Rodd



PURSUING THEIR LAWFUL OCCASIONS IN LABYRINTHINE BAGDAD

Bagdad long ago lost the magnificence of architecture and ornament that made it famous in the days of Haroun Al Raschid. The town, as it now exists, lacks plan, and the unpaved, mostly narrow streets are flanked by uninviting houses of yellowish red brick taken from old ruins, with latticed windows on the first floor, and, below, only mean doors to break the monotony of the walls

Photo, Major W. J. P. Rodd

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easy of access by river from the desert outposts on the Euphrates, where the caravans off-load from Central Arabia ; it is the ancient Babylon-Ecbatana (Hamadan) road which was the pathway of armies for centuries before the Chosroes, and it lies on the great pilgrim route from Persia to the holy Shiah shrines of Kazimain, Kerbela, and Najaf.

Thus, in the narrow barren strip of land between the Tigris and the

archaeologists have identified the crumbling monuments of succeeding dynasties of the Assyrian, neo-Babylonian, Persian, and Greco-Parthian periods.

Ctesiphon, eighteen miles from Bagdad, was the capital of the Sassanidae, and Seleucia, on the opposite bank of the Tigris, of the last Greek empire in Mesopotamia. Bagdad, in the time of the Abbasid Caliphs, was the centre of Islam, and in after years,



CROSSING THE TIGRIS TO MOSUL BY THE BRIDGE OF BOATS

Mosul, always important from its position on a great caravan route into North-West Persia, has acquired new importance from the oilfields in the vilayet of which it is the capital. It stands on the Tigris, here crossed by a bridge, partly of stone and partly of boats. The latter portion can be cut in time of flood, or to allow the passage of traffic

Photo, Major W. J. P. Rodd

Euphrates, three hundred and fifty miles inland from the Persian Gulf, the excavator has brought to light the relics of many buried civilizations. The buildings which are pointed out to the visitor at Babylon belong to the comparatively modern period of Nebuchadrezzar (561-504 B.C.), but there are traces in the ruins left by the first Babylonian kings (circa 2,500 B.C.), and deep down below the water level relics that point to a prehistoric city. In the strata superimposed

until General Maude entered the city in March, 1917, the southern capital of Asiatic Turkey. Since Aug. 23, 1921, the Emir Feisal has reigned there as king of the Arab confederation which, under British auspices, replaced the Turk.

Bagdad has probably always been cosmopolitan. In the arched and vaulted thoroughfares of the bazaars one meets a diversity of races, drawn as in old times along the old roads to the metropolis by motives of commerce or faith. The mosque of Abdul Kadr



MERCHANDISE AVAILABLE FOR EVERY TASTE AND NEED

Merchandise of all kinds is stacked in the dark little shops that line the arched and vaulted thoroughfares of Bagdad's bazaars, and the races represented among the buyers and sellers are as various. Flat projecting beams supporting roofs of dried leaves or branches of trees and grass, are common in the streets of the business quarter and afford grateful shelter from the sun

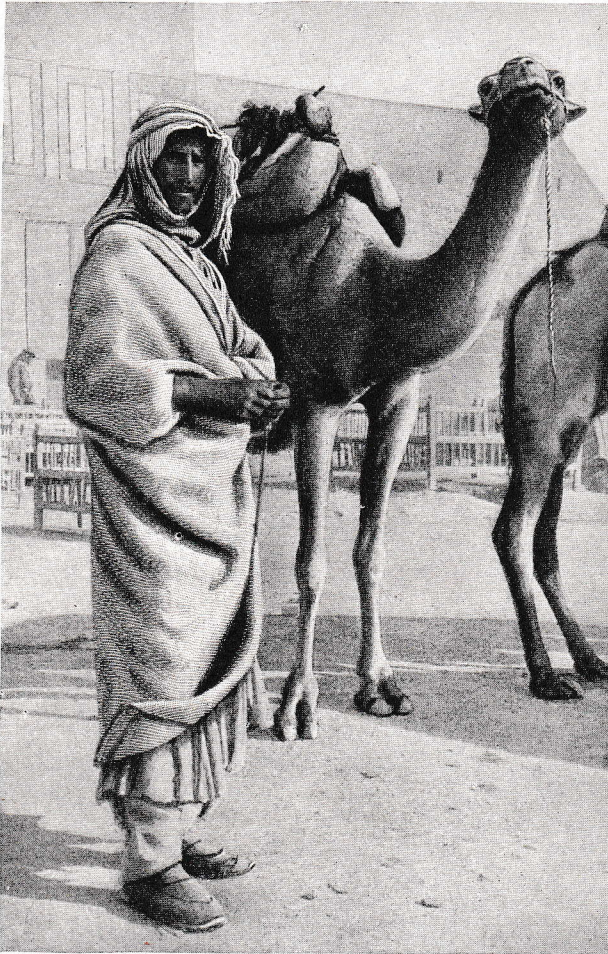
Photo, J. L. Mudd



CIVILIZED DESCENDANTS OF ANCIENT NOMAD STOCK

Exceptional dignity and grace, and beauty of no mean order, are displayed by these Arab women of Amara. The family belongs to the higher social class of the settled Arab population, engaged for the most part in business, and the man was in the service of the British Government as interpreter to the forces. Riverain Arab women are fair, and go unveiled

Photo, C. Kemp



ONE OF "THE PEOPLE OF THE CAMEL"

Beduins of the inner desert are a fine, proud people, generally of commanding figure, erect, lithe, and taut as steel, with a stamp of nobility set on their features by generations of freedom

Photo, R. Gorbald

is frequented by Sunnis from all over the East; the Shiah pour in from Persia and India to the shrine of Kazimain, many of them Seyyids, descendants of Ali, with their tarbushes wound round with the green turban. One may recognize the Kurds and Lurs by their high bulbous hats of rough felt, like elongated coal-scuttles, their smooth locks hanging free and clipped about their ears after the Afghan fashion; the Bakhtiari by his brimless top hat, the Tartar by his astrachan of the north. The fez, of course, is ubiquitous, and is worn by

Turks, Armenians, and Jews, and by all the hybrid flotsam and jetsam of the streets, from the Turkish official to the Chaldaean astrologer or Ethiopian slave. The precise-looking Persian merchant from Dizful or Ispahan is wearing the brown or black abas of the Arab, which flows from the shoulder like an undergraduate's gown. The kefiyah, the headgear of the Arab, is a blue or red-spotted kerchief, bound round with the aagal, a twisted coil of black or brown camelhair rope. Many of the women wear black horsehair visors; one meets them coming up from the river bank carrying water in tapering copper vessels with fluted necks.

The dark taverns are crowded with Arabs, who squat on their high pew-like benches, gravely discussing the high politics of the desert, drinking coffee, and playing dominoes or dice. Wild-eyed Beduins, generally on horseback, pass distrustfully in the streets, which in many quarters are so narrow that the

bags on the pack-animals rub the walls on either side, while the latticed and fretted bow-windows overhead almost meet. The massive iron-clinched doors, with their curious antique brass knockers, open into spacious courtyards planted with palms and orange trees and pomegranates. The houses are two-storeyed, the verandas on the four sides of the first floor overlooking the courtyard.

In the dog-days the Bagdadi takes refuge in the serdab, a kind of vaulted cellar sunk some six feet under the ground level with ventilation shafts, which run up to the roof and end in



ITALY: TWO GAY RAGAZZI OF THE CAMPAGNA

The vivacity of these two sun-tanned lads of the Roman Campagna is drawn, like the love of colour displayed in their traditional costume, from the brightness of their own blue skies

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Photo, Donald McLeish



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hood-like cowls, all pointing the same way to catch the shamal, or prevailing north wind, which provides the only alleviation against the suffocating heat. The temperature in the serdab is generally from eight to ten degrees lower than in the rooms on the first floor.

From May to October the whole population of the city sleeps on the roof. In 1917 the shade temperature rose to 122.8 degrees in Bagdad, and 122 degrees in Basra. Bagdad has the advantage of a drier atmosphere and cooler nights than obtain in the lower part of the delta, where the humidity of the air is relaxing. Perhaps the climax of discomfort in Mesopotamia is reached in Basra during September, when "the date wind," under which the crops ripen, rolls up the moisture from the Gulf and then drops, leaving a clammy, humid film in the air as suffocating as a blanket.

The only broad thoroughfare in Bagdad was cut through the city in 1916, and named after Khalil Pasha, the Turkish commander, to whom General

Townshend's garrison surrendered. By the irony of fate, the street which was built to commemorate the British reverse at Kut was completed just in time to admit the passage of the British troops, eleven months afterwards, through Bagdad. The architecture of the city is picturesque and distinctive, if not imposing. In colour the only relief to the dun monotony of the walls and roofs is the peacock-blue and old gold of the mosques and minarets.

Few of the buildings are old. The foundations of most of the houses gave way in the floods of the thirties of the nineteenth century, but the old bricks have been used again, some of them the debris of Babylon, and there is no air of modernity in the purlieu of the city. The mosques, with their solid foundations, escaped destruction by the flood, and have preserved some good examples of fourteenth-century Arab architecture.

The most inspiring view of Bagdad is from the broad sweep of the river front. The chief houses and consulates



DEFT FINGERS SUPPLEMENTED BY PREHENSILE TOES

Revolving on spikes at either end, the piece of wood is revolved by a saw-like movement of the bow in the wood-turner's right hand, the string passing round the piece and thus supplying the rotary motion. The sunlight illumines the turner's work while a little Arab holds the bar on which he steadies the chisel that is held with both feet and one hand

Photo, R. Gorbald

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ARAB BOYS PADDLING CANOES IN FRONT OF BAGDAD

As peculiar to the Tigris as the gufa and mahaila is the bellum, a light, rather graceful canoe-shaped boat, which is paddled or poled according to the depth of the water. At Basra they correspond to the gondola of Venice, being particularly convenient for navigating the numerous little tidal canals that intersect the town. These boys' canoes are small modified forms of the bellum

Photo, W. A. Harvey

are built on immensely solid revetments with their foundations deep in the water. Many of them have small gardens with steps running down to the river. The main city is on the left bank; the suburb on the right bank contains little of interest beyond Zobeide's tomb, a tall, tapering, crenellated minaret, like an inverted fir cone. The railway station lies in the desert beyond, a mile from the Tigris. The river is now crossed by two bridges of boats, admitting of traffic passing only one way.

The cauldron-like gufa described by Herodotus, a reed basket with wooden uprights, planted over with pitch from the bitumen wells of Hit, is still used as a ferry, and is probably the oldest type of vessel in the world. The long narrow canoe-shaped boat is the Arab bellum, the gondola of Basra, which is paddled or poled, according to the depth of the stream. The mahailas, with their high forward-sloping masts, huge rudder, lateen sail, cut-away barbed prow, and poop boarded over for the crew, are the indigenous cargo-

boats of the river, and carry anything from fifteen to seventy tons. Downstream on the Shat-el-Arab, the bold and sweeping curves of the river craft are even more reminiscent of illustrations of the sagas. At Basra one meets the Arab buggalow, with the penthouse roof astern, intricately carved, and windows through which one looks for the face of Sindbad, or the boom of Koweit with its sharp stern and nose of a swordfish.

The country around Bagdad is capable of great fertility. A single year of British administration sufficed to alter the face of the desert, and achieved more for the prosperity of the Arab than a century of Ottoman "reform." The settlement and development of the country kept pace, as the Expeditionary Force advanced, with the occupation. Under Ottoman rule, owing to the lack of control of the irrigation, and the vicious land revenue system with its fluctuating assessments, which left the cultivator at the mercy of the farmer of taxes, outlay and initiative were

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discouraged. The new system saw the lifting of the general blight.

The constructive energy of the British was visible in the railways, dykes, dams, and irrigation channels. Land which had lain fallow for years became rich and profitable. The great Euphrates Irrigation Scheme, designed by Sir William Willcocks and constructed by Sir John Jackson's firm, was actually finished before the Great War, but the Turk, by his supineness, neglected to profit by it. The digging of the new canals and the scouring out of the disused ones, essential to the working of the scheme, was left to the British. They occupied the district in June, 1917; three hundred thousand acres were at once brought under irrigation, and the summer of 1918 saw a blossoming of the desert which had no parallel in the memory of the Arab.

The mineral wealth of Mesopotamia is limited to the bitumen wells of Hit, the petroleum wells of Qaiyarah in the neighbourhood of Mosul, and a few

stone quarries on the Euphrates. The undeveloped resources of the country are mainly agricultural. Its potential productivity has perhaps been exaggerated. Nevertheless, with capital, initiative, and a settled government it might yet become a considerable granary as in the past.

Under the Emir Feisal the Arabs have again become the dominant race. They are a homogeneous people, speaking one language. But any forecast of the future in which they figure as the regenerators of the soil that has been restored to them must be guided by considerations of their character and history. It would be unwise to count too much on the development of Mesopotamia by the Arab, whether fellah or Beduin, until he has proved himself strong enough with British support, unbacked by the necessary legions, to maintain his solidarity and independence.

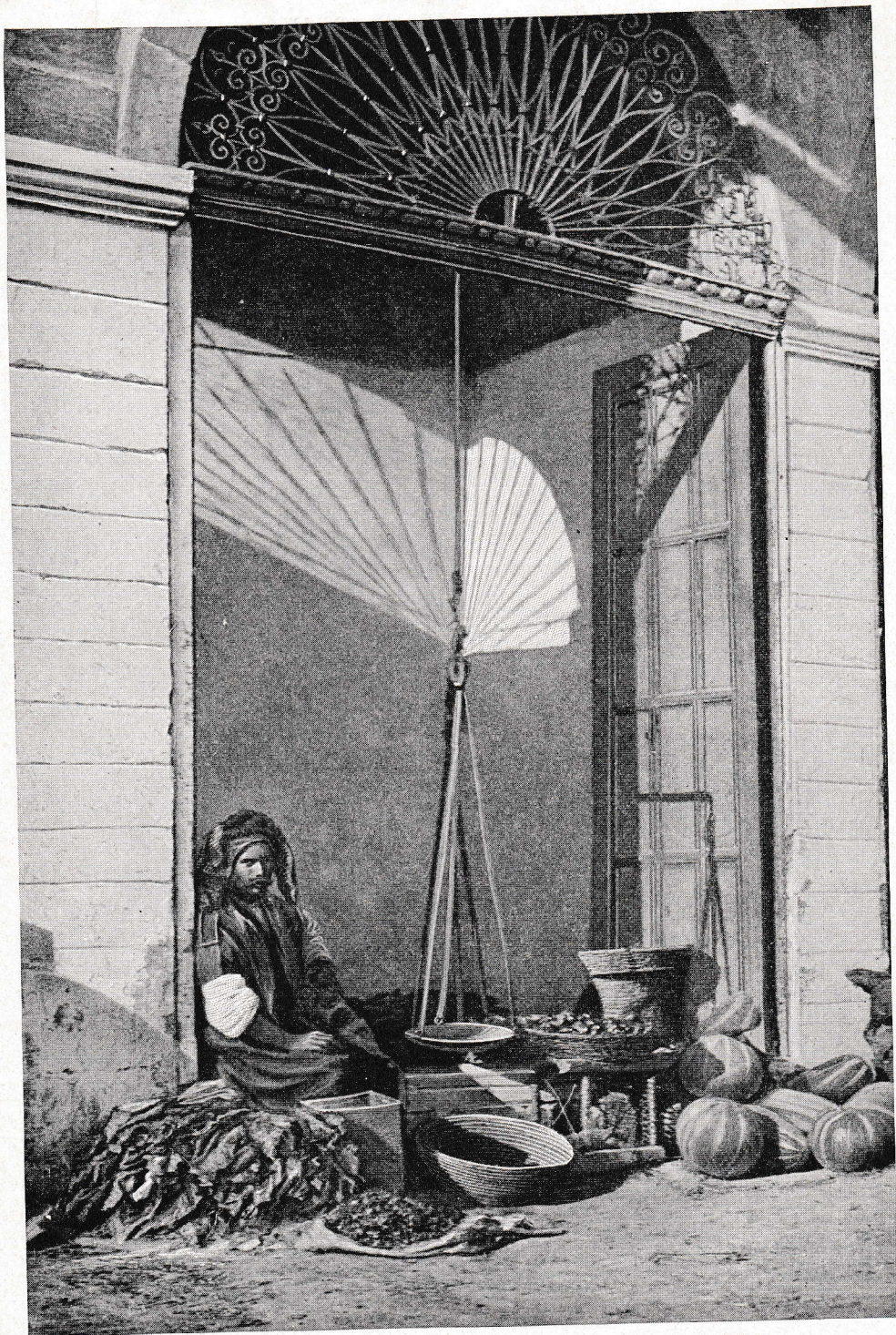
Mesopotamia, with all its historic associations dating from the Sumerian



QUAINT BASKET BOATS USED FROM IMMEMORIAL TIMES

Probably the oldest type of vessel in the world, the gufa is still used, chiefly for ferrying purposes, on the Tigris. It is a large circular basket of reeds, plastered inside and out with pitch from the bitumen wells of Hit. Gufas vary considerably in size, and are used both for conveying passengers and for transporting fruit or other commodities

Photo, W. A. Harvey



FRESH FRUIT AND VEGETABLES FOR SALE IN MOSUL

Mosul's shops are mostly poor, and disproportionate grandeur is given to this fruit-seller's scantily furnished emporium by the good casement windows, topped by elaborate iron fan tracery. His stock includes some fine melons, which, with other gourds and vegetables, are grown to perfection in the islands and dry portions of the river-bed of the Tigris during the season of low water

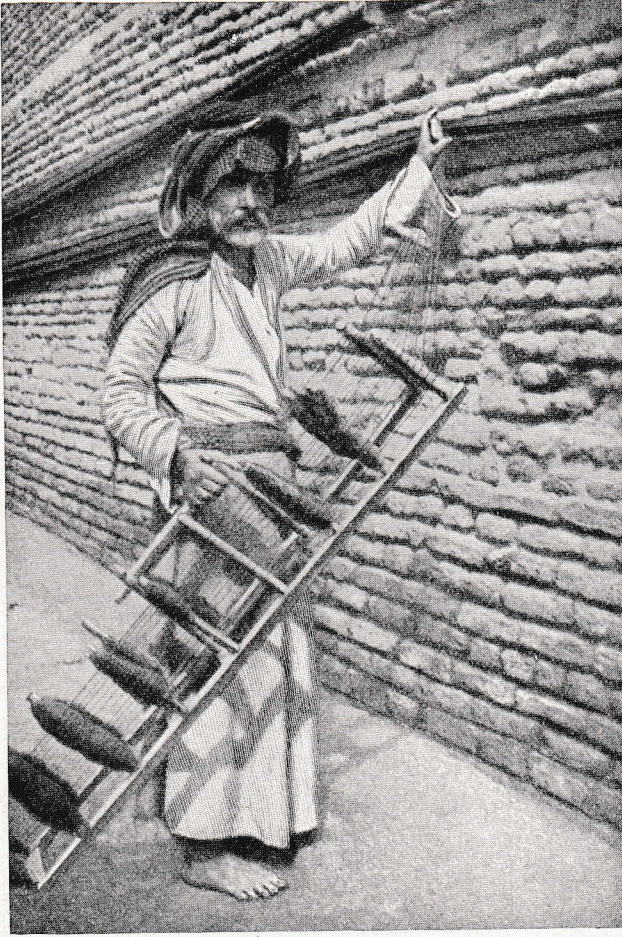
Photo, Albert E. Cree



AMID THE CLINKING CANNIKINS OF THE TINSMITH'S SHOP

All is grist that comes to the mill of this Arab tinsmith, and the unusually tidily arranged shelves of his small workshop show a curious medley of wares—Eastern jars and lanterns rubbing shoulders with Western tankards and pot-bellied circular lamps, while bully beef tins provide him with plenty of tin and solder for patching up old vessels and fashioning new

Photo, R. Gorbald



BEARDED WEAVER OF IRAK'S CHIEF CITY

With his twelve spindles swollen with thread this Bagdad weaver is holding them up for inspection against the ancient wall of time-worn bricks between whose interstices the mortar has long since begun to crumble

Photo, R. Gorbald

paradise, is singularly devoid of ancient monuments or relics, beyond brick and dust, of bygone civilizations. The only abiding monument of man's greatness that still stands on its foundations is Ctesiphon, the arch of the Chosroes.

Far more attractive than the Biblical or classic sites of Mesopotamia are the Shiah shrines of Najaf, Kerbela, Kazimain, and Samarra. Kazimain, four miles upstream from Bagdad, on the Tigris, is the burial-place of the seventh and ninth Imams. Samarra on the Tigris marks the spot where the twelfth and last of the Imams—the promised Mahdi—disappeared in a cave

before he reached the age of twelve. The pilgrims who flock to the golden mosque near by Julian's tomb expect his advent there.

At Kerbela is the mosque of the martyred Hussein, the son of Ali, and at Najaf the mosque of Ali. These desert shrines, lying on the pilgrim route from Bagdad to Mecca, are a magnet for the faithful all over the East, for the religious sentiment of the fervent Shiah clings more closely to the tradition of Ali and Hussein than to the memory of the Prophet himself. It was at Kerbela, some twenty miles to the west of the Euphrates, that Hussein and his small band were overwhelmed. The Moharram festival, which is celebrated by the Shiahs with such frenzied beatings of the breast, weeping, and self-inflicted wounds, is a dramatisation of the scene at Kerbela. After twelve hundred years their anger and sorrow are so intense that the uninitiated spectator might think they were commemorating a tragedy of yesterday.

It is the dearest wish of the Shiah's heart to be buried at Najaf or Kerbela that they may be near Ali or Hussein on the Day of Resurrection. Their Wadi-al-Salam, or Valley of Peace, is the fold in the desert outside the north wall of Najaf. Here one may meet the bodies of the faithful coming in from Merv or Bokhara, or Teheran, wrapped in wattle or silk or bundles of palm leaves, according to their condition. Some lie buried in the mosque itself where Ali lies, others in the houses of the city, or in rooms rented by relatives of the corpses, but most in the vast cemetery beyond the north wall, directly

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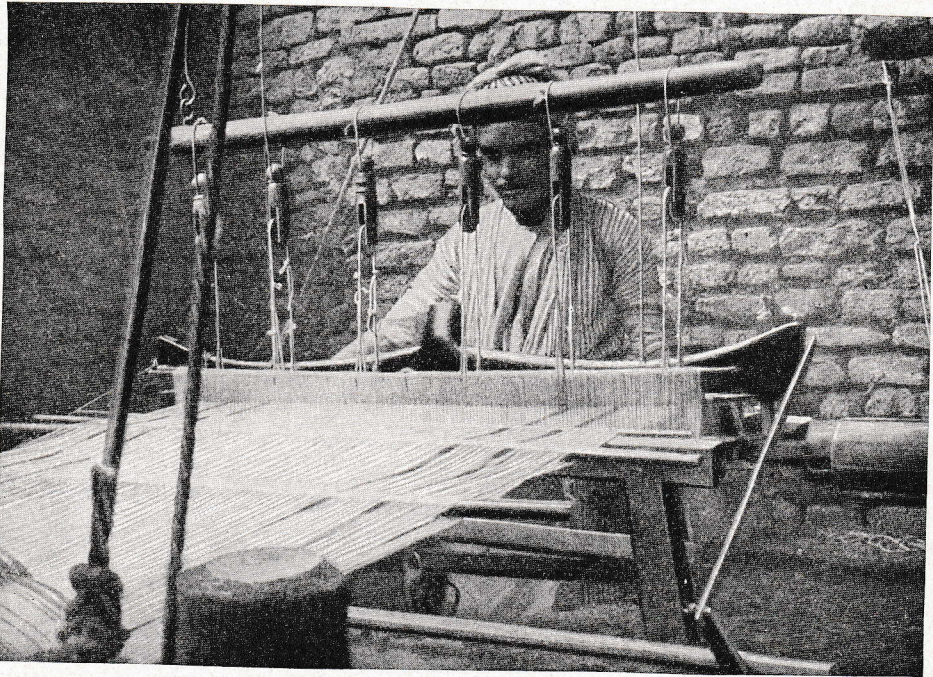
between Ali and Hussein, among crumbling monuments and humble slabs, where countless small domes, the colour and shape of thrushes' eggs, lend the only relief to the camel-coloured sand.

Najaf is far the most picturesque and impressive desert city in Mesopotamia. It stands on a high bluff six miles from Kufa, its river port on the Euphrates. The golden dome and minarets of Ali's tomb, dominating the earth-coloured walls of the city, are visible to pilgrims three marches from the shrine. Apart from its sanctity, Najaf is a great desert emporium where the caravans of Central Arabia bring in the raw material of the desert and return with rice and clothing, where Beduin middlemen exchange the silks and calicoes of Homs and Hama with grain, cattle, and merchandise from Basra or Bombay.

The city, but for the fact that it is approached by a tramline from the Euphrates, shows no trace of Western

influences. The merchants and their clients probably differ little in dress, habit, or mind from those who frequented the dead cities of the Euphrates in the days of Pharaoh. One may watch the wild Beduin, who regards the door of a house as a trap and a roof over his head as a menace to his security, and the Persian pilgrim floating ecstatically in the crowd intoxicated with religious fervour. It is difficult to get a near view of the mosque. Only as one wanders in the bazaars one catches a glimpse of the rich mosaic of blue and green and gold glittering at the end of some covered avenue.

At Kerbela and Kazimain one may stand by the gate and peer into the courtyard, but at Najaf a near approach to the shrine by the infidel is resented, and the only way to gain a view of it is from the roof of some friendly Arab or Persian's house. The bazaars, an irregular and intricate warren of alleys and courtyards, preserve more of the ancient



WARP AND WEFT ON A SILK LOOM IN BAGDAD

Among the oldest of handicrafts is the weaving of fabric, and here we see an Arab hard at work making silk in a cellar, in whose cool atmosphere he can labour the more comfortably. The main principles of the machine before him are similar to those which have been in use generation after generation, for modern appliances make but slow progress with the native craftsman

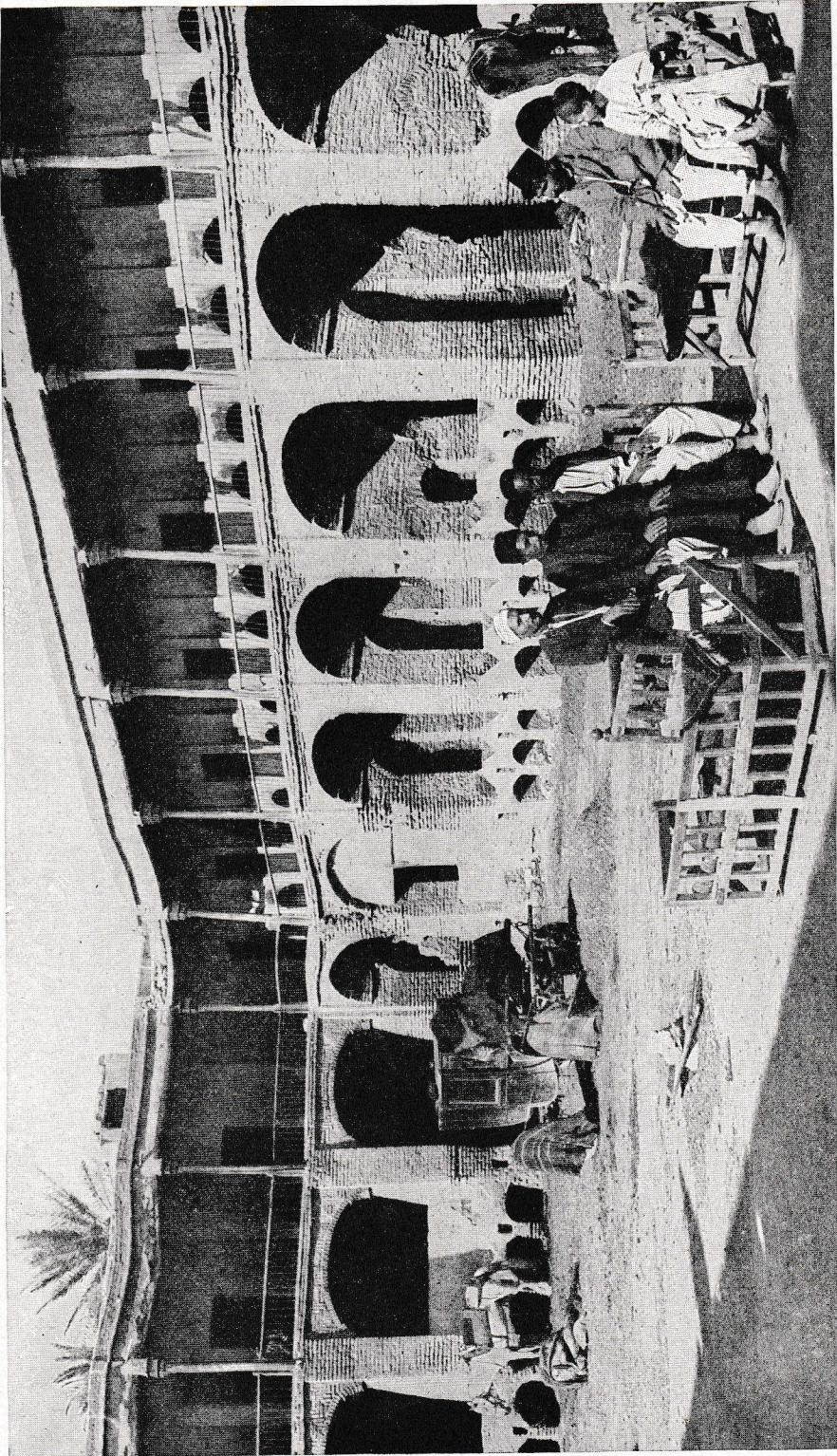
Photo, R. Gorbald



ARABS AT EASE OUTSIDE A CAFÉ IN THE VALLEY OF THE TIGRIS

In the cool evening the men of the vicinity who have borne the day's burden and heat find pleasure in relaxation by the gliding river, whose changeless flow forms a soothing accompaniment to the murmur of easy conversation. On the veranda, with its rude seats and thick-thatched roof, the coffee, a delicacy of which the Arab never tires, and the fragrant fumes of tobacco have an added delicacy of flavour. Here, till night shuts the café's narrow doors, its turbaned patrons may enjoy a protracted prelude to their leisurely homecoming in discussing their own and their neighbours' business

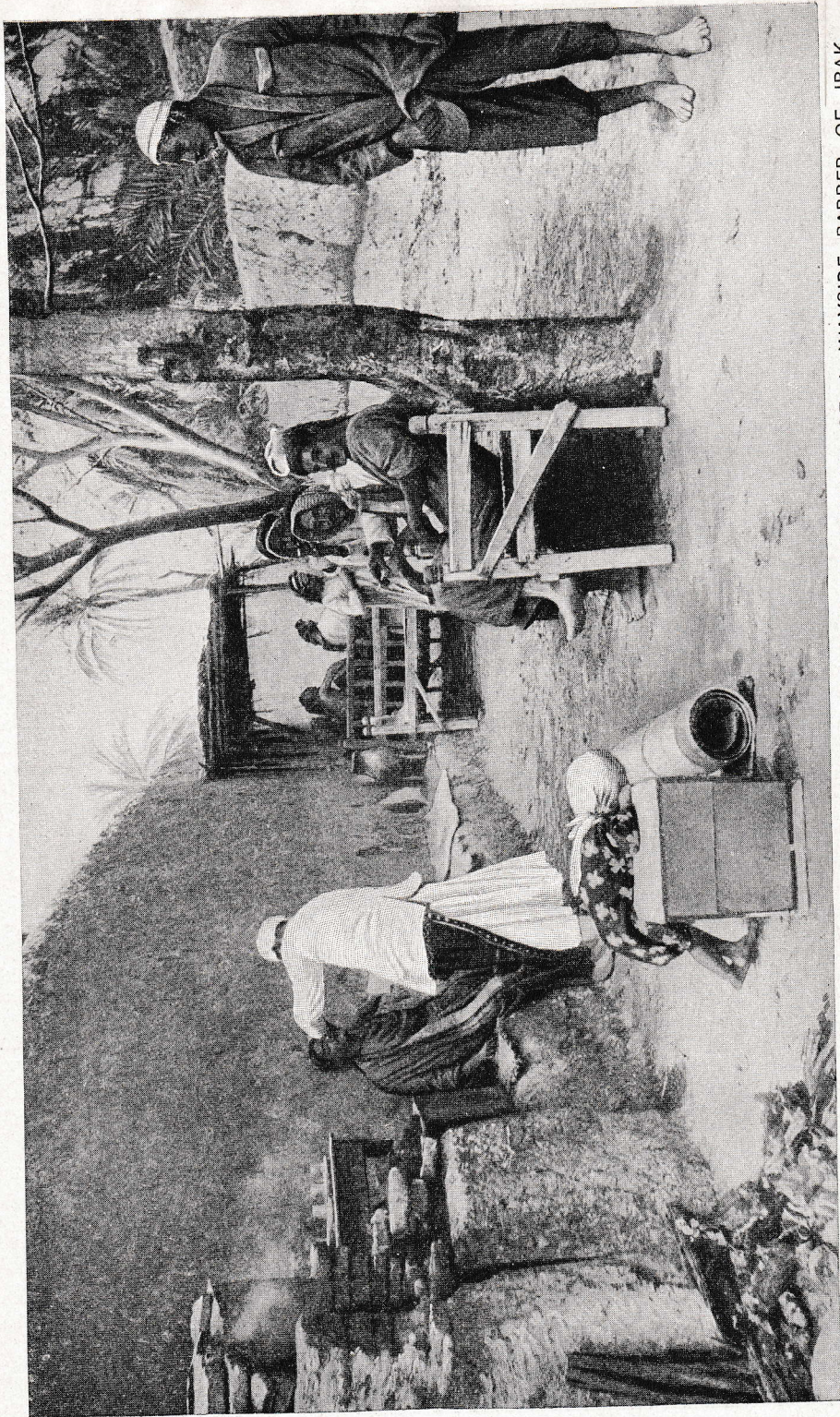
Photo, Harry Cox



GOOD ACCOMMODATION FOR PILGRIMS IN A CARAVANSERAI IN THE CITY OF KERBELA

Kerbela, some sixty miles south-west of Bagdad, where Hussein, son of Ali the fourth Caliph, was slain in A.D. 680, almost ranks with Mecca as a Moslem holy city. Something like a quarter of a million Shiah Moslems annually make pilgrimage to the great shrine with golden dome and gilded minarets that contains the martyr's remains. Like Mecca, Kerbela's material prosperity depends largely on the pilgrims, for whom caravanserais like this provide accommodation. They are built round the four sides of an open courtyard, with stables for animals on the ground floor and bare rooms for the travellers above

Photo, Major W. J. P. Rodd



PATIENT CUSTOMERS WAITING THEIR TURN IN THE OPEN-AIR ESTABLISHMENT OF A WAYSIDE BARBER OF IRAK
 Here are no glass shelves laden with bottles of many-coloured unguents. Even the barber's chair is absent, and a rough mat laid upon the unkind surface of the mud wall must serve the purpose. Those who sit and wait have the benefit of a tree's welcome shade, and the passer-by is perhaps weighing his chances of a shave against their number. The little girl is determined to miss no detail of this fascinating operation, and the photograph admirably illustrates the leisureliness and the indifference to publicity that characterise the Oriental man in the conduct of his personal affairs

Photo, T. Starnes



BARBER-SURGEON OF IRAK: A MAN WITH TWO TRADES

The importance of his calling, combining surgery and shaving, may account for the smile on his Mephistophelean features. In Amara, where the photograph was taken, the practice of joining the two occupations still obtains, and this is the less surprising when the Arab's indifference to the curing of ailments and his readiness to leave all to Allah are considered

Photo, E. Kemp

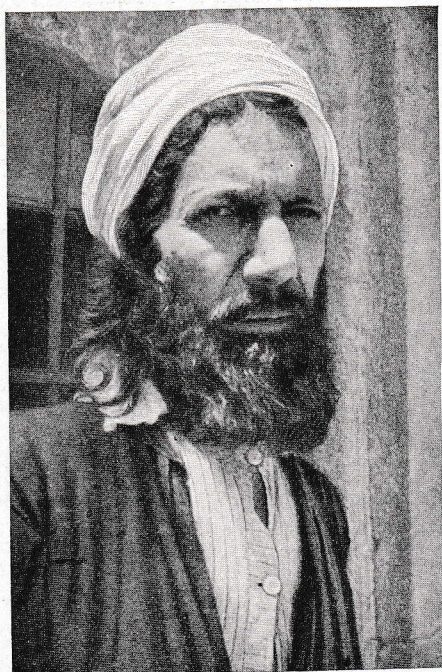
East than one finds in other Arab cities. Those of Bagdad, Cairo, and Damascus appear modern and hybrid in comparison with them. The city is fabulously rich, for the profits of sanctity from endowments and the contributions of the faithful are great. Treasure in the form of gold and silver and jewels and precious stones, silks and shawls and

pearled curtains is buried and sealed in the vaults of the mosque.

A large part of the population is dependent on religious charities. The city contains more than twenty ecclesiastical colleges and some 6,000 students of religious law. As the seat of the great Mujtahids, who have the power of promulgating religious orders and interpreting

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the Koran and the Law, Najaf has always exercised a predominant influence in Shiah Islam. In Persia especially, the home of Shiahism, this influence has been felt, and it was said in the past that the Mujtahids could make or unmake a Shah. Now that democracy has entered the East, the



TO HEIGHTS OF LEARNING BRED

Learned in both civil and ecclesiastical law, the Mullah is an influential personage among all Mahomedan peoples. In Irak he beats the drum ecclesiastic to less martial purpose than some of his brethren have done elsewhere

Photo, R. Gorbald

sanction of Najaf or Kerbela is sought by parties and factions where it used to be sought by kings, and the desert cities have become even more the seats of religious bigotry and fanaticism and the storm centres of political intrigue.

The Euphrates markets, of which Najaf is one, are the connecting links between the great nomad confederations and the settled population of the riverain tracts. The rulers of the inner desert are Ibn Rashid and Ibn Sa'ud, the Emirs of northern and southern Najd, and farther north, Fahad Beg, the chief of the Anazeh, who are spread over the desert from the Euphrates

to the Syrian border. These tribes were practically independent of the Sultan; the Turks did not attempt to impose military service on them.

In the absence of the Osmanli, sentiment points to the Emir Feisal, the popularly-elected sovereign of Irak, the son of the Sherif of Mecca, an Arab of the family of the Prophet, as their natural ruler. But the politics of the inner desert are as shifting as sand. The picture of a centralised Arab organization of tribal groups owing permanent fealty to an overlord is a chimerical vision. The proud Beduin has always been his own master, and probably always will be. The only hold the paramount power in Bagdad



ARAB WITCHERY UNVEILED

Her languorous eyes, pencilled brows, and the half-smile that just lifts a corner of her mocking mouth are eloquent of the torrid East

Photo, R. Gorbald

can have over the desert tribes is by closing the markets to them.

The Beduins are independent of everything but supplies. Guns, and pots and pans, corn and ammunition the desert cannot give them. They must come in to the frontier outposts for most



RELIGIOUS ECSTASY RUNNING RIOT IN THE FAST OF RAMADAN

Fanaticism goes to extremes among some Mahomedans, and extraordinary scenes are enacted on the occasion of certain religious ceremonies. The last ten days of the fasting month of Ramadan are specially sacred, and on the concluding day the wildest fanatics gash themselves with knives in token of mourning, and inflict the goriest tortures of flagellation on their own bodies



CARNAGE SELF-WROUGHT AT HILLA IN THE CAUSE OF HOLINESS

Parched with thirst and exhausted by their prolonged absolute fast, these misguided people persist in their self-torture even to death. Thus the swooning fanatic, in blood-saturated robes, shown supported in the background of this photograph, expired a few minutes later. These photographs give some idea of the fearful and unforgettable scene as it was enacted at Hilla in November, 1918

Photos, E. Kemp



AFTER THE FRUIT IN A GROVE OF DATE PALMS

Tension on the rope around the trunk enables the climber to maintain himself, and he is further aided in this by the deep leaf-scars which afford a foothold. The date palm, a native of North Africa, is also cultivated in the Levant and India, but there is a world of difference in the quality of the fresh-plucked article and the dried remnant of export

Photo, J. L. Mudd



GATHERING THE FRUITS OF THE EARTH IN DUE SEASON

The date palm is the chief source of income to the riverain population of Irak, and its fruit is their staple food. Eaten fresh, it is delicious, sustaining but not satiating, despite its richness, and free from the heating property which it possesses when dried. These Arab women are collecting in their flat basket the fruit which is being picked by a man at the crown of the tree

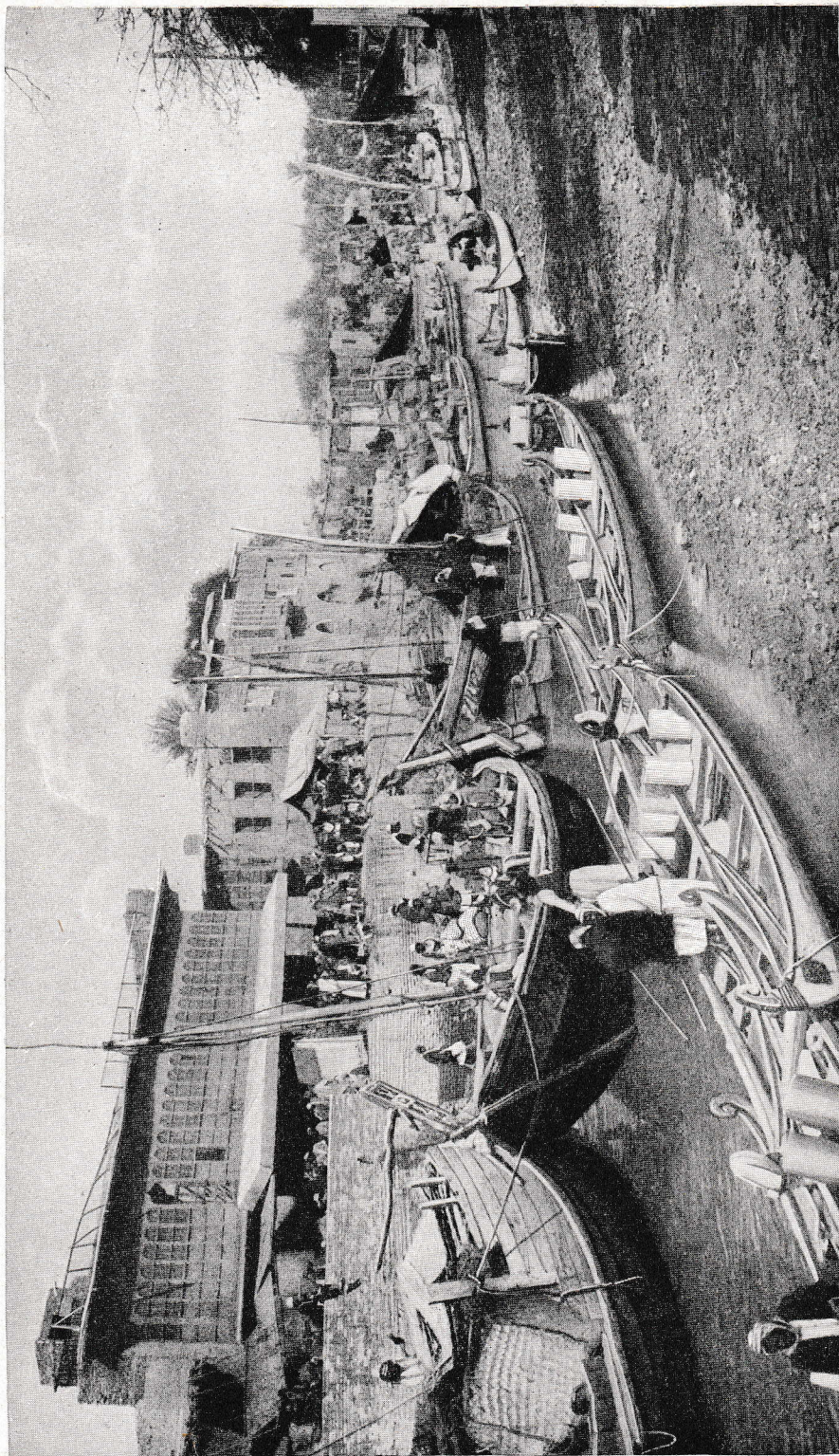
Photo, Harry Cox



"WHAT THE EYE DOESN'T SEE THE HEART DOESN'T GRIEVE AT"

As dried and sold in Europe, the date is a very different article of food from the fruit newly gathered in its proper habitat. Part of the process of preparing dates for export consists in pressing them, and in Irak this is done as shown here, men pouring them into bags and treading them down with naked feet, as grapes are still trodden in some vineyards

Photo, J. L. Mudd



ACTIVITY ON ASHAR CREEK, BASRA, THE CENTRE OF TRANSHIPMENT BETWEEN IRAK AND THE OUTER WORLD
As the main seaport of Irak, with regular steamship communication with Europe and India, Basra is immensely important commercially. It stands at the head of navigation on Ashar Creek, by which all merchandise is brought by boats and mahailas from and to the big ships in the Gulf sixty miles below. Thus Ashar Creek is always humming with activity, Kurds and Arabs unloading grain, and cargoes of rice and coffee from India, and of manufactured articles from Europe, or loading outgoing mahailas with dates and other produce exported from Irak

Photo, Albert E. Cree

of the necessities of life. In the wilderness they may set up or depose their sheikhs, settle their own confederacies, but their dependence on the markets for provisions and clothing enforces on them, if not an exact observance of treaties, at least a certain respect for constituted government in the settled tracts and some limit to their depredations.

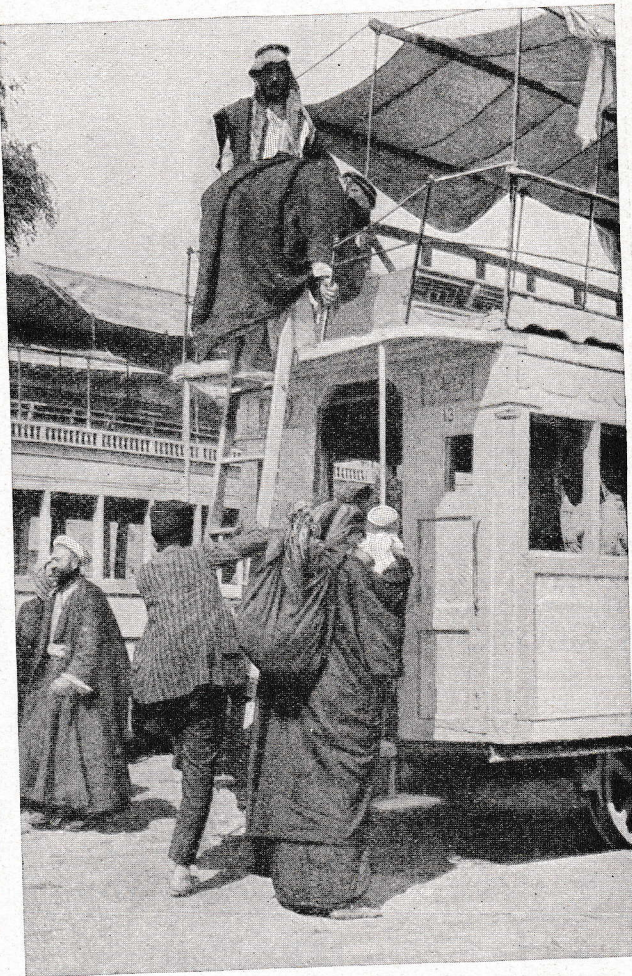
Beside the fellah of the delta the Beduin is generally a commanding figure, thin, erect, lithe, and taut as wire, with a certain stamp of nobility on his features, the imprint of generations of freedom and self-sufficiency. In the same way, the waste lands over which the children of the wilderness exercise their primitive sway are more inspiring than the disciplined tracts that have absorbed their degenerate kinsmen.

After the monotony of lower Mesopotamia it is a relief to come upon land with any features to it. The limits of the flat, uncompromising delta are reached on both rivers some sixty miles north of Bagdad. At Hit, on the Euphrates, one enters a new country, a land of limestone and gypseous clay, where the valley winds between low hills. Between Samarra and Tekrit, on the Tigris, one enters the broken desert steppes that stretch northward for 150 miles to

Mosul, an arid, verdureless country, but very satisfying to the eye after the delta. The cultivation between the rivers is negligible. The Euphrates, along its whole course, is the more fertile of the two. The spring vegetation, though short-lived, is fresh and homelike, in

great contrast to the tracts farther south that are as flowerless as the deserts of Sind or the Punjab.

But the best antithesis to the dead, featureless land through which the British troops fought their way up the Tigris will be found in the Jebel Hamrin



WESTERN DEVICES FOR EASTERN DEVOTEES
Kazimain, four miles upstream from Bagdad on the Tigris, contains the burial places of the seventh and ninth Imams. For the convenience of pilgrims to these Shiah shrines, Midhat Pasha built a small tram line in 1870

Photo, K. N. Moysen

range and the Diala valley close to the Persian border. The broken ground here is the old sea margin; north and east the landscape becomes more varied, rocks and streams and meadows, which in spring are carpeted with wild flowers. One has left behind the flat alluvial silt



PRIDE OF POTTERY

This is the potter's daughter engaged in arranging the products of her father's craftsmanship, damp from the wheel, to dry in the sun

where flowers do not grow, or grow unwillingly.

Kurdistan, farther north, part of which also falls within the confines of Mesopotamia, is a land of streams and rolling downs and wide horizons bounded by the hills, a fertile, well-watered plateau, with abundant cornfields and pasture. Stripped of this fringe of foot-hills, valleys, and mountains, which really belong geographically to Persia on the east, and Asia Minor on the north, Mesopotamia is easy to describe: flat desert or undulating barren steppes, with strips of irrigated

land intermittently along the banks of the two rivers.

No religious, intellectual, or Arab nationalist movement is likely to proceed from the soil of Irak. Arab regeneration, if it is to come, will be inspired by "the people of the camel," who alone have preserved the independence of character from which initiative springs. For centuries the Ottoman hand has laid its blight on the country, forbidding initiative, sterilising spirit and matter. British administration, which alone might have saved Mesopotamia, is out of the question. And it would be sanguine to hope that, under the Arabs, if, indeed, they are left in possession, the desert will ever be restored to its Babylonian fertility.



SEMI-FINAL STAGE IN THE BIRTH OF A BOWL

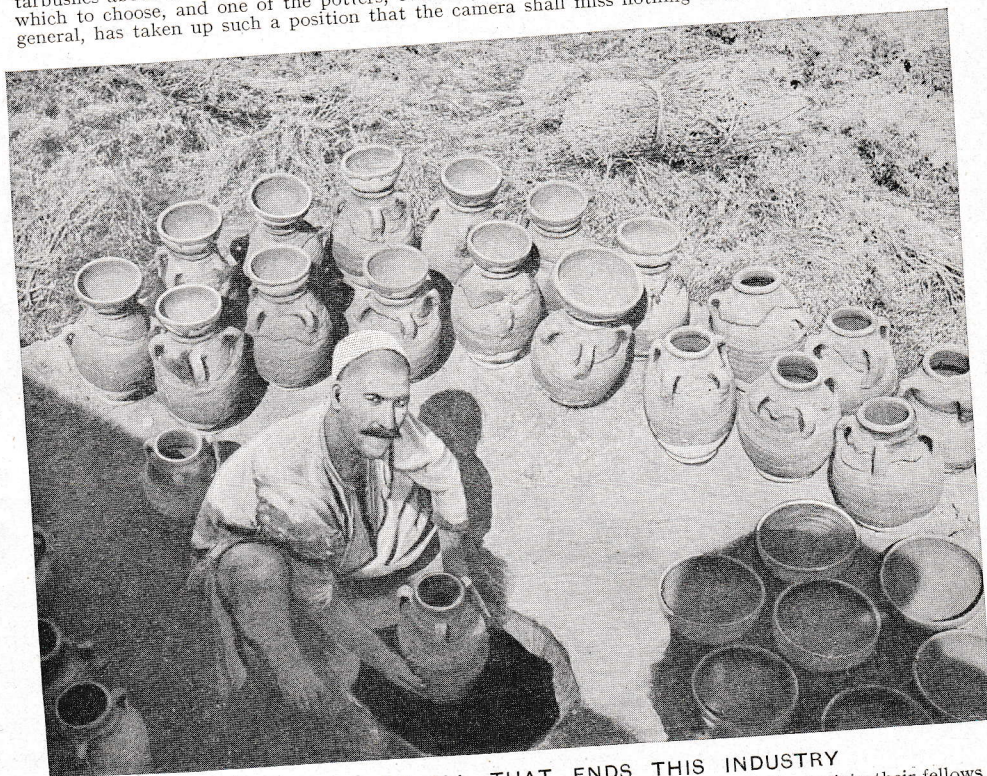
Here the glazing mixture is being applied to the almost finished article, and behind the aged workman are rows of ready-fashioned crockery in process of drying before being taken to the kiln

Photos, Major W. J. P. Rodd



EARTHENWARE FACTORY IN THE POTTERY DISTRICT OF BAGDAD

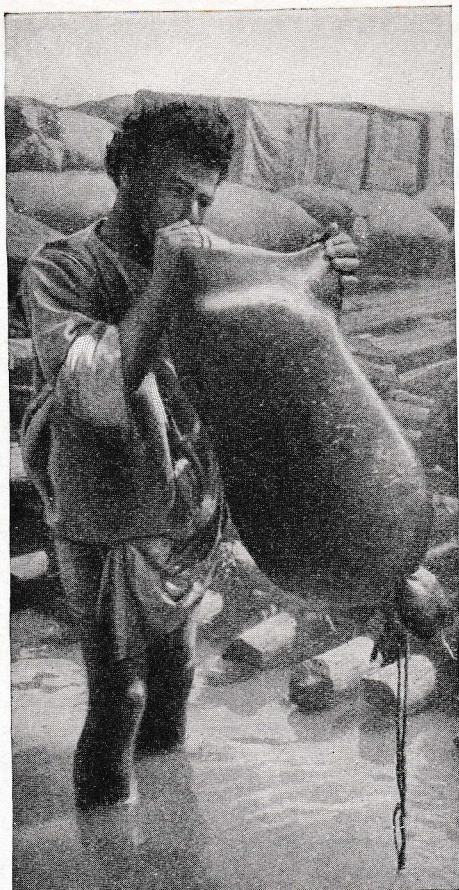
Without the city wall is the potters' village, and the photograph shows some buyers in their astrakhan tarbushes about to inspect these products of native manufacture. On every hand are samples from which to choose, and one of the potters, evidently well pleased with his work and the situation in general, has taken up such a position that the camera shall miss nothing of his white-robed person



LAST STAGE OF ALL THAT ENDS THIS INDUSTRY

Passed down into the dark deep kiln for their completion, these pitchers are going to join their fellows on the shelves round the space hollowed out below. Brushwood will then be taken from the pile behind the pots, stacked in the kiln, ignited, and the man inside—invisible in the photograph—having climbed out, will close the entrance till the fire has done its work

Photos, Major W. I. P. Rodd



A HUMAN AIR PUMP

He is inflating a skin to serve as a float, a task for which he would find a bicycle pump better adapted than lips and lungs



FLOATING MADE EASY

With his goatskin filled, the native wades into the river, confident that however long its crossing takes he certainly will not sink



TAKING HIS CUSHIONED EASE ON TIGRIS STREAM

Goatskins filled with air are an ingenious device in common use for crossing the Tigris. Blowing one up, as shown above, the native rests his breast upon it and propels it forward by kicking out with his legs. A similar device in use on the river Sutlej in India is shown on page 2809

Photos, R. Gorbald

Irak

II. From Babylon's Empire to the Modern Arab State

By A. D. Innes, M.A.

Associate Editor of "Harmsworth's History of the World"

THE name of Mesopotamia signifies the land lying between and including the basins of the two great rivers, Euphrates and Tigris, which rise in the mountains of Armenia and in later historic times mingle their waters at some distance before they disembogue at the head of the Persian Gulf. In the earliest historic times the lower lands had not yet been raised above sea-level by the silt which the floods bring down year by year, and the rivers entered the Gulf separately some way above their modern point of confluence.

Lower Mesopotamia, or Irak (or Iraq) as it is now called, the region, roughly speaking, between Bagdad and the sea, shares with the Nile Valley the distinction of being one of the two areas in possession of a continuously recorded history extending over more than 5,000 years, unless we may credit China with being a third. The early records are either monumental carvings or inscriptions on clay in the cuneiform script which the Mesopotamians would seem to have invented. The area fell into the two divisions—Akkad the upper, and Sumer the lower. Sumer in this pristine stage was the land of the Sumerians, a people neither Aryan nor Semitic, but of a type suggesting kinship with the Dravidians of India, or possibly with the Chinese. Whence they came we do not know, but we do know that five thousand years ago they had learnt to use metal implements and were already dwellers in builded towns. The Sumerian records suggest that the dwellers in Akkad were Semites, and curiously enough, while they present their own gods as of Semitic type, those gods were clearly not the indigenous deities of the Semites themselves. When Semites dominated the Sumerians, it was the conquerors who definitely adopted the culture of the conquered, not vice versa.

The story of Mesopotamia down to the conquest by Cyrus the Persian is one mainly of periodical Semitic dominations, gradually or suddenly yielding to the Sumerian influences of Babylonia, which, except when the power of Assyria was at its greatest height, was the constant or recurring culture-centre of the whole region.

Either the Semites were indigenous in Upper Mesopotamia and the northern mountains, or they came thither from Arabia through Syria, across the western Euphrates. They appear actively about 3000 B.C. Till that time Sumerian towns or states—Lagash, Umma, Eridu—have the field to themselves. Then Semitic lords are found ruling in Akkad. Tradition elaborates a mighty monarch, Sargon of Agade, about 2700 B.C., who, like certain Egyptian kings, was probably a composite of two or three actual princes, who, with a successor, Naram Sin, subjugated Sumer, and led conquering armies to the



IRAK AND ITS PEOPLE



ONE MAN'S IGNORANCE IS ANOTHER MAN'S OPPORTUNITY

Many of the natives of Irak are unable to read or write. Profiting by this common illiteracy the professional scribe is a familiar figure in the towns. He sets up his table by any convenient wall and translates the halting thoughts of his clients into flowing periods, which he then reads aloud for the approval of his employer and the edification of any casual listener

Photo, W. A. Harvey

Mediterranean on the west and the hills of Elam (the later Susiana) on the east. Then the Sumerians recovered an ascendancy tempered by Elamite conquests, till, a little earlier than the twentieth century, the Semites again predominated.

In the twentieth century emerges the great figure of the Semite Hammurabi, king of Babylon (in the Hebrew record, Amraphel, king of Shinar), the contemporary of Abraham, the Semite Sheikh from whom sprang the Hebrew people. We find Amraphel in alliance with an Elamite, a Sumerian, and a Hittite king from the north-west. Hammurabi was a mighty prince, who codified the laws and customs of Babylonia. His code, in the cuneiform script, survives to this day, witness to a very advanced political and social organization, which regulated slavery, the relations of debtor and creditor, employer and employee, and shows that women enjoyed a notable freedom.

In the eighteenth century the power of Babylon was broken by a great Hittite incursion from beyond the Taurus mountains. The Hittites or Khatti retired, but the ruin they had wrought gave entry to a new people from the east, apparently Aryan predecessors of the Medes and Persians, who set up the dynasty called Kassite in Babylonia, and a kingdom known as Mitanni in north-west Mesopotamia, though they only provided their dominions with an Aryan aristocracy ruling over a Semite population with a Sumerian infusion in lower Mesopotamia. Somewhat later we find these Kassite and

Mitannian monarchies in active diplomatic relations with the Egyptian Pharaohs, especially with Amenhotep III. and IV., which brings our story down to the fourteenth century.

Assyria now appears on the stage—a Semite power with its headquarters on the upper Tigris, pushing itself cautiously towards a front rank position by playing off Mitanni against Babylonia, each of which regarded the growing power as its own vassal and dependent. The Hittites, too, thrusting from Asia Minor, were aiming at an ascendancy in Syria. Mitanni during the century was crumbling away. In the thirteenth century the Hittites became the dominant power of the north-west, but in the middle of the century there began a period of chaos in which Assyria made her first bid for ascendancy; the Hittite dominion perished, apparently of inertia. Babylonia and Assyria strove against each other with alternating fortunes, and finally, early in the twelfth century, the Kassites were ejected from Babylon by a dynasty of native origin.

Names which were to become extremely familiar at a later date—the first Babylonian Nebuchadrezzar and the first Assyrian Tiglath-Pileser, both of them distinguished warriors—appear in the latter years of the century; but then there followed two hundred uneventful years before Assyria again arose portentous, and during that period there had arisen that group of Syrian powers, the records of one among which have given to all peoples nursed upon the Hebrew

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Scriptures a sense of extreme if superficial intimacy with Babylon and Nineveh, the Chaldee and the Assyrian.

In the days of "Jeroboam the son of Nehbat, who made Israel to sin," began the revival of Assyria under Adad-Nirari. From the close of his reign (890 B.C.) the registering of annual magistracies (like that of the Roman consuls in later days) preserved a precise record of dates in Assyrian history. In 884 Adad-Nirari's grandson Ashur-nasir-pal succeeded to the sceptre of Nineveh, inaugurating the long and awful period of the Assyrian tyranny. Nineveh stood on the outskirts of the Mesopotamian civilization. The conqueror Ashur-nasir-pal organized the people of Asshur as a purely military state, existing for the purpose of conquest and adopting "frightfulness" as the guiding principle of the conqueror. The rude Assyrians were trained as a nation in arms, utterly merciless, lusting for blood, cruel from sheer delight in inflicting pain.

Ashur-nasir-pal's victories were accompanied by the most ruthless massacres on record. Sated after some years of campaigning, he passed the close of his reign in raising magnificent temples to Asshur

and the other gods of his people. He did not turn upon Babylonia; the region of his conquests was in the north and the west. His son Shalmaneser, invading Syria, met with a check at the hands of Benhadad. The material success of his reign was the conquest of Babylonia, which he accomplished by effecting the restoration of a dethroned prince who necessarily received the crown as his vassal. In fact, the large mercantile community of Babylonia found greater security for its trade under the military sovereignty.

During the latter part of the ninth century Assyria was hard pressed by the expanding state of Urartu or Ararat in the northern mountains; and then there followed half a century of disintegration, which was ended by the usurpation (745) of the military adventurer who took the name of Tiglath-Pileser IV.—just after Babylon had, apparently, recovered independence under Nabonassar—and a new era of devastating conquest began.

A military demonstration sufficed to convince Babylonia of the wisdom of submission. A short campaign taught the eastern mountaineers a similar lesson. Then it was the turn of Syria and Urartu.



LORDLY INDOLENCE BESIDE THE STREAM OF LIFE

Dignity of presence and of manner the Arab possesses in good measure, but of the dignity of labour he has no idea. He deems it more consistent with his masculine importance to sit in stately indolence among his peers, enjoying the soothing influence of tobacco smoke cooled in the hookah set before him where he watches the activity of the rest of the human swarm.

Photo, W. A. Harvey

Northern Syria and Urartu were smitten. Then came southern Syria. The two Hebrew kingdoms were prompt in submission. Wherever resistance had been offered Tiglath-Pileser introduced the system most characteristic of Assyrian conquest—the populations were deported en masse, and other populations were imported to take their place.

When all Syria had been rendered tributary, the conqueror bestowed his attention on a disordered Babylonia where Chaldeans from the south-eastern borders were giving trouble, having overturned the reigning dynasty. The Assyrian subjugated the Chaldeans, and at last set on his own head the crown of "Sumer and Akkad" (729).

Assyria's Splendour and Extinction

A revolt in the south brought upon Samaria the vengeance of Tiglath-Pileser's short-lived heir Shalmaneser, who was succeeded in 722 by Sargon. Sargon completed the destruction of the kingdom of Israel. But he found himself ousted from Babylon by a Chaldean rebel, backed by the power of Elam. The south revolted again, and received support from Egypt. The Assyrian arms were completely victorious, but the conquest of Egypt was postponed. The empire was again being threatened from the north-west and north-east. Conquest was impracticable, but Sargon's return from the south brought a pacification of the borders, and the Chaldean Merodach Baladan was suppressed in Babylonia.

Sargon's successor Sennacherib lost Babylon to the Chaldeans and Elamites, but recovered it again. His unsuccessful expedition against Egypt and the destruction of his host is recorded in the Hebrew chronicle and by Herodotus, but not in the Assyrian register. The Egyptian conquest was actually effected by his son Esarhaddon, and completed by the next king, Ashurbanipal (Sardanapalus), who also waged war upon Elam, to the complete destruction of that power.

Empire follows Empire in the East

But when he died, in 626, the vast, unwieldy empire was hopelessly unmanageable, for the Assyrian never organized an imperial system like Darius a century later. Under feeble successors it broke up into its component parts. Babylon once more set up a Chaldean dynasty, and in conjunction with the newly-arisen power of Media fell upon Assyria. In 606 B.C. the tyrant power was blotted out for ever.

Babylon rose again on the ashes of Nineveh. Nebuchadrezzar, as a conqueror, continued the Assyrian practice of deportation. He was also a great military engineer, and the probable creator of those "hanging gardens" which were

counted among "the seven wonders of the world." But his reign ended in 562; his successors were incompetent, and in 539 Cyrus the Persian turned upon Babylon from his victories in the west, captured it, and absorbed it into the Persian empire of which he was the creator. From that time Mesopotamia was never anything but a province of one empire or another, until in the eighth century (A.D.) Bagdad rose to prominence as the headquarters of the Moslem Caliphate.

After Persia was overthrown by Alexander the Great the Macedonian empire fell to pieces. Mesopotamia went to the Seleucids, but in course of time, when the dominion of the Parthian nomads arose in the east, Irak, or Babylonia, was generally included in the Parthian empire. Rome never established a continuous authority beyond the Euphrates. In the early centuries of the Christian era Parthia gave way to a new Persian empire, which, in its turn, generally kept its hold upon Mesopotamia, though in perpetual conflict with the eastern Roman empire after Constantinople became its headquarters. The contest reached its climax at the beginning of the seventh century (A.D.), but was brought to an end by the sudden irruption of the followers of Mahomet.

Vicissitudes under Moslem Sway

In 632, the year of the Prophet's death, Persia had been greatly weakened by its struggle with the emperor Heraclius. It still kept its hold upon Irak proper, the old Babylonia; Syria and the old Assyria were more or less subject to the empire. The first caliphs turned the arms of the Arabs upon Persia and Syria separately. Within ten years all that had ever formed part of the Assyrian or Babylonian empires was under Moslem sway.

Both Irak and Syria were mainly Semitic, but Irak was largely impregnated with what may be called cosmopolitan but especially Persian influences, and also by a hereditary hostility to the Syrians. During the next hundred years, while Islam was confused by sectarian antagonisms, the orthodox Caliphate, resting upon Syria and with its headquarters at Damascus, found Irak and Persia perpetual hotbeds of disaffection; and when, in the middle of the eighth century, the Ommyad caliphs were, in the east, overturned by the Abbasides (descendants of the Prophet's uncle), the Abbasid caliphs established their headquarters in Irak; through which lay not only the road communications with the farther east, but also the sea communications by way of the newly-established Basra on the Shat-el-Arab at the head of the Persian Gulf.

Here a new court and a new city were established at Bagdad on the Tigris, which

IRAK & ITS STORY

may be said to have taken the place of the ancient Babylon. Before the end of the century Bagdad had become the wealthiest, the most luxurious, and the most enlightened city in a world where enlightenment was as yet very much to seek, though the splendour of the great Haroun Al Raschid (786-809) is not without legendary elements, like that of his great contemporary Charlemagne.

Not only was Bagdad the centre of commerce, the terminus of the caravans from the east, it was the centre also of the most active literary and scientific culture of the middle "Middle Ages." Even the Hellenism which had perished in Western Europe was preserved or revived by the Bagdad Caliphate, and filtered into the west from Saracen more than from Byzantine sources. And it is curious to find that an infinitely wider toleration was permitted to diversities of religious opinion than in the Western world till many centuries later. The Arab might wage war on idols, but the infidel might go his own ignorant way, and the heretic might preach what he chose so long as his heresies were not politically subversive.

The Arabianised Irak was great as the seat of a powerful Arab Caliphate. Its political importance waned as the Abbasid dynasty found itself compelled to rely upon mercenary forces, instead of upon the traditional tribal system of levies, for the maintenance of its own authority. Islam spread into the Trans-Oxus regions, where it found fanatical adherents in the Turkish tribes; the Turk mercenaries, called in by the caliphs, soon became their actual masters while nominally their servants. The Turkish ascendancy reduced Irak to impotence.

The devastating inroad of the Mongols in the thirteenth century completed its ruin. Persia broke away from Bagdad, and for some centuries Irak was alternately a province of the Turkish or the neo-Persian dominion till in the seventeenth century it was permanently incorporated in the Ottoman empire. As in all areas dominated by the Turk, not only did all

progress cease, retrogression took its place. Long before the nineteenth century Mesopotamia had reverted to the primitive Semitic tribal conditions which preceded Hammurabi, while Turkish rule meant little but the exaction of taxes for the benefit more of Turkish officials than of the government they were supposed to serve.

The available statistics at the beginning of the twentieth century gave about two-thirds of the population as Arabs (the prevalent language is Arabic), Kurds (the hillmen who troubled the Shalmanesers) and Turks making up almost another quarter, the miscellaneous remnant being chiefly congregated in the towns. The population of upper Mesopotamia is much more sparse than that of Irak proper.

In the latter part of the nineteenth century there set in a period of European competition for concessions, the British having already established a considerable trade and an appreciable influence which was jealously regarded in other quarters.

When in the first months of the Great War Turkey threw in her lot with Germany, Arabia, with the approval of the Allies, rejected the Turkish authority and recognized the King of Hejaz. The Turkish armies in Mesopotamia were finally shattered in the campaign of 1918. The Turk was ejected from Mesopotamia, of which the administration was temporarily assigned to Britain as mandatory of the Powers.

But it was by no means clear that the Arab tribes would accept a British protectorate even with Arab autonomy as an ultimate goal; and in 1921 the Arab Emir Feisal, son of King Hussein of Hejaz, accepted the proffer of the crown of Irak upon certain understandings—generally presumed to mean that the British administration would carry on with his authority, pending the organization of the new State under British guardianship, of which the immediate withdrawal could only result in chaos. With the proclamation of King Feisal on August 23, 1921, our story closes.

IRAK: FACTS AND FIGURES

The Country

District between Kurdistan north, Syria and Palestine west, Arabia south, and Persia east. Total area estimated at 143,250 square miles. Includes vilayets of Bagdad, Basra, and Mosul. Population (1920), 2,849,282.

Government

After the Great War, recognized as an independent State under a Mandatory Power (Great Britain). Emir Feisal, third son of King of Hejaz, proclaimed King of Irak by popular vote August 23, 1921, and a Cabinet was formed to succeed the provisional Council of State.

Defence

Except with consent of Mandatory, local forces to be employed solely for the maintenance of order and defence.

Commerce and Industries

Chief product, oil; petroleum wells at Qaiyarah, near Mosul, and at Mandali. Bitumen deposits at Hit. Wheat, barley, cotton, dates, and ground nuts grown; soil rich, and agriculture being developed by irrigation. Principal exports, carpets and grain. Railways link Basra, Samarra, Kehl, Hilla, Bagdad, Kuraitu, Kazimain, Kala Shergat, and Kut-el-Amara. Telegraph lines, 2,995 miles. Chief seaport, Basra.

Religion and Education

About 1,146,680 Sunni Mahomedans, 1,494,000 Shiahs, 87,488 Jews, 78,790 Christians. Numerous Government schools; special attention given to secondary and technical education.



BAREFOOT BEAUTY STOOPS TO FILL HER BUCKET

Where the young stream bursts impetuously from the grassy hilltop, making before the black entrance of this stone-mouthed tunnel a frothy, bubble-flecked pool beneath the brambles, a sweet-featured colleen leans to swing her stout bucket down to the water. Her face she has draped demurely with a bright-hued handkerchief, but, against the background of rock, there are charms less effectually veiled

Photo, Horace W. Nicholls